

Conference Report on H.R. 1141, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act
May 18, 1999

By Henry A. Waxman

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 1141, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Conference Report. This bill contains a myriad of provisions of the worst sort--riders slipped in without ever being considered by the full House.

One rider stands out among the rest as being particularly ill-conceived and short-sighted: the provision to completely give up the federal share of the tobacco settlement without any commitment by the states to improve public health.

Ten years from now, people will look back on this legislation and ask how Congress could give away nearly \$140 billion federal health care dollars without guaranteeing that even a single penny would be spent on public health. They will ask how Congress could overturn thirty years of Medicaid law--without a single hearing so that members could understand the ramifications of the legislation and without any action by the full House so that Members could debate and vote on the issue.

This provision has no business being on an emergency supplemental appropriations bill that provides disaster aid for Central America and funds for military operation and refugee relief in Kosovo.

It is not an emergency appropriation issue in any sense. What it is, however, is one of the biggest giveaways of federal health care dollars I have seen in my entire congressional career.

The size of this giveaway is breathtaking. Nearly \$140 billion federal health care dollars are being given to the states to spend as they please. That is enough to pay for the existing out-of-pocket prescription drug costs for every single Medicare beneficiary who currently lacks prescription drug coverage. Yet these federal health care dollars are being relinquished with absolutely no commitment that the states spend the money on improving prevent youth smoking, improving public health, or increasing access to health care.

Mr. Speaker, when history looks back on this legislation, it will be seen as a deal that served the tobacco interest, not the public health interest. I strongly believe that it is the height of irresponsibility for the Congress to give away billions of federal health care dollars for nothing.

I strongly urge my colleagues to vote no on H.R. 1141.

